

# FEMMES D' ESPRIT

THE  
HONORS  
PROGRAM  
MAGAZINE

ISSUE #1  
05-06



COLLEGE  
WELCOME TO VARSITY HONORS

# EDITOR'S LETTER

Jeanene James '08

Do you remember the moment? The day? The feeling? Taking a line from the infamous M.J., Do you remember the time when you fell in love? I do; although my moment of realization may have come a little later than others'.

It was freshman year in my INS class. As I sat, caught up in Dr. Smart's furious anti-Republican discourse following Bush's triumph over Kerry in the 2004 election, I realized the power of his convictions. I listened as he eloquently yet wrathfully expatiated on the approaching devastation of the democratic system as we know it. Normally, such a lecture would strike me only mildly. Kind of like one of those true, yet taboo, "the future is in your hands" lessons. But this time was different. The passion and fervency with which he spoke lit something inside of all of us. Gone were the days of "ignorance is bliss." When shrouded under the umbrella of youth, we could all live blissfully ignorant of the power that we wield in determining the course of our individual and collective futures.

Dr. Smart instilled in us all a sense of importance as students, as women, and as educated citizens. He threw the ball in our court and asked what we would do with it. But this question stretched so far beyond American politics. Dr. Smart made it clear that we must take hold of every opportunity presented to us, and use it to cultivate a positive agenda for ourselves.

Furthermore I realized that I was seated amongst a group who felt the same. I was part of a class of women who know their importance in the world, and are willing to work ardently to become the doctors, lawyers, scientists, scholars and highly educated individuals, passionate about securing a place in a world whose history we, as women and many of us as minorities, have

largely been left out of. This was my official "Welcome to Varsity Honors" and I fell in love.

Being able to study, live and socialize with women of "strength, heart and difference," as one of our earlier issues suggested, is truly an honor in itself. Having the opportunity to collect the various perspectives, experiences and reflections of such individuals in this scholarly magazine is yet another. As the new Editor-in-Chief of *Femmes D'Esprit*, I hope only to create a source that demonstrates the power, depth and ambition of the Honors students here at the College of New Rochelle.

I feel as though the contributions within this issue are potent in their exemplification of the rich pool of knowledge existent amidst the students of Honors. So dive in; meet the freshmen class; share precious experiences; look at the world through an artist's eyes; be moved by the ambitious efforts of your fellow students who are making differences in the world through their actions, their words, their art and their wisdom.

Dr. Smart would often remind us of a quote by e.e. cummings that states, "each day I prepare a face to meet the faces that I will meet." With that, I encourage you to meet the faces of this issue, as their influences are tremendous, their determination is astounding, and their mind-power is immense. The Honors Program is an eclectic mixture of such faces, all of which contribute in unique ways. Hopefully, this idea is captured in this issue of *Femmes*. So welcome to "Varsity Honors" ladies; this is what college is all about.

Sincerely,  
Jeanene James

- does not know from whom s/he takes;
8. To forestall charity completely by enabling all fellow human beings to have the ability to earn a livelihood, to strengthen each person so that there is no need to ask for help from anyone.

While all of the eight stages are better than sitting and doing nothing, it is the eighth stage of charity, or *Tzedakah*, that Maimonides describes as being the most honorable, as living at the top of the golden ladder. But what does this have to do with Katrina?

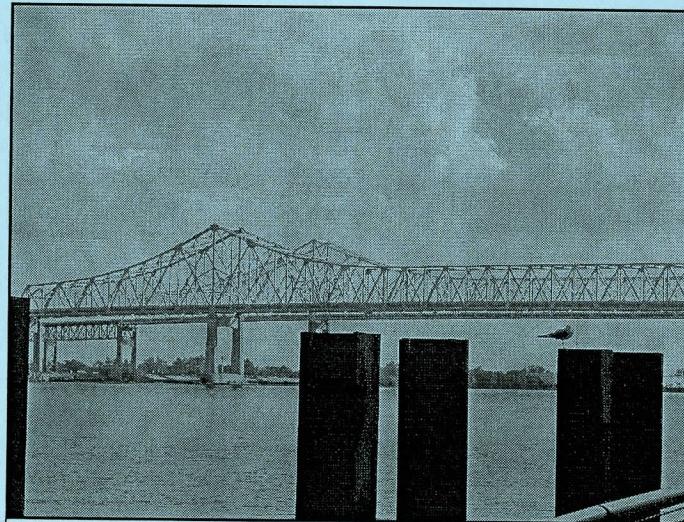
When former First Lady Barbara Bush toured the Astrodome in Houston to speak with those who had been displaced from their homes and had endured harrowing, life-threatening days in the

wake of the natural disaster, she stated, publicly: "And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this is working very well for them." I repeated her statement to the students in one of my classes our first week back this semester, and for the

first time in my academic career, I created silence around the seminar table. The reaction, I must say, was on target: what can we say? What should we be more afraid of: natural disasters such as that of Katrina, or public, powerful figures who think that housing people in a sports arena is a step up?

Unfortunately, we are used to being told that many things are beyond our control. Terrorism is beyond our control. Indeed, it presents an exemplary catch-22: we are

to ignore it while we deal with it, or else "they" have won. But weather, perhaps, is even further out of our jurisdiction, particularly when it spotlights for us just how unjust, unequal, and seemingly uncaring our society is, regardless of the outpouring of charity that usually fol-



*Above: a picture of the Mississippi River in New Orleans taken by Dr. Bass last November during the National Collegiate Honors Council conference.*

*Photo: A. Bass*

lows it. Imagine, for a moment, what it was like to be a member of Houston's year-round homeless in the days that followed Katrina, watching strangers from another city brought in on buses to be taken care of, given food and water

*Continued on Page 23*

# SENIOR CHECKLIST

## 2005 - 2006

*There are many significant dates to remember for your senior year in the Honors Program – application due dates, advisement periods, and so on. As well, seniors should begin to think about the days and months after graduation. You need to take the initiative to ensure your success in the years to come, but please remember that the Honors Program offers a supportive environment to help seniors work through the challenges that graduation presents, whether through senior year advisement, or with the Resume Workshop to be held on November 8th. Good luck!*

### Fall 2005

<input type="checkbox"/> NCHC Annual Conference, St. Louis	October 26-30, 2005
<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal Period Ends	November 1, 2005
<input type="checkbox"/> Advisement Begins	November 4, 2005
<input type="checkbox"/> SAS Honors Convocation	November 5, 2005, 10:30AM Chapel
<input type="checkbox"/> Resume Workshop	November 8, 2005, 12:30-2 PM Honors Center
<input type="checkbox"/> Drop-Off Registration for Seniors	November 18, 2005

### Spring 2006

<input type="checkbox"/> Deadline to apply for graduation	January 30, 2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Application for Honors Diploma Due	March 8, 2006
<input type="checkbox"/> Northeast Regional NCHC Conference	April 6 – 9 Pittsburgh
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior Honors Dinner	TBA
<input type="checkbox"/> SAS Hooding	TBA
<input type="checkbox"/> Commencement	May 25, 2006

### Helen Gillies

Hi! My name is Helen Gillies, and I am an honors freshman here at the College of New Rochelle. I come from Mystic, Connecticut, and I went to Robert E. Fitch Senior High School. I came to the College of New Rochelle because it has such a wonderful atmosphere, the sociology, psychology, and chemistry departments seemed really interesting, and everyone was so nice. I joined the Honors Program for enrichment, and to prove to myself that I really can do anything I put my mind to. My major is Sociology, and I am thinking about being a double major of Psychology and Sociology, with a possible minor in Chemistry. I know that's a lot of work, but I'd like to be a forensic psychologist, or toxicologist when I leave college. I really, really love forensic science. It may mean graduate school, but it's defiantly worth it.

### Alexandria Bignall

Hello, my name is Alexandria Bignall and I am a freshman in the Honors Program. I am glad that I decided to join the CNR community, for I now see that the message of sisterhood, unity and service are present everywhere. The campus is a very peaceful place and I feel very comfortable here. In the beginning, I was very apprehensive about settling into a new place where I must do things for myself. However, upon arriving at the school and meeting new people, I gradually became accustomed to the new lifestyle. I chose to be in the Honors Program because I had a desire to challenge myself during my college experience. The Program sounded very intriguing and welcoming, which were important factors that led to my decision. I hope to increase my knowledge through this experience and get a better sense of myself as a young woman. This college emphasizes the importance of an education among women and challenges us to reach far beyond our potential. The teachers here are kind, passionate about their jobs and are willing to help if it is needed. Hopefully through this experience, I will be able to come out on top and strive for a better future, but I do not think that will be a problem.



### Kerry Deas

I first saw the campus of CNR after I had already made my decision to attend this school. I was a bit nervous, not knowing whether I would like the campus, the girls, and the all-around atmosphere of the college. However, my mind was put to ease after the two-day orientation in July. I thought the campus was beautiful and the girls seemed to be nice. My complete happiness with my decision did not come until after I moved into my dorm room. Once I began my classes and met more girls, I felt very comfortable. My teachers are so kind and willing to help, which is refreshing to see. Moreover, my parents are pleased with my decision as well. I have joined the Black Student Union and signed up to do some volunteer activities with Campus Ministry. The more active I become, the more suitable I feel to be in college. The campus lends itself to peace and quiet and invites me to study and work hard to do well in my classes. I have already entered a comfort zone that should hopefully last all four years of my undergraduate experience.

*Left: Some students from the Freshmen Honors class of 2009 in Dr. Paler's INS Class.*

Photo J. James

### Katie Fitzpatrick

When I was in my Junior year of High School, I was fairly convinced that my intuition would grab my college search with a lasso and pull me to where my heart had been for a while, the golden state of California. After visiting one summer, I swore to myself that one day I would live there. I saw College as my chance to get away

from Middletown, try something new, and head to some enticing west coast city by the bay, on the coast, or in the mountains. Anything beginning with "Las," "San," or "Santa" was good to go. As I looked through schools though, I realized that I didn't necessarily want what California schools had to offer, educationally. I visited CNR and fell in love with the warm, cozy environment. Everyone knew everyone else's names and the people I encountered seemed to really care about the world around them. Now that I'm here, I appreciate the choice I made. By choosing CNR, I have chosen the opportunity to have a close-knit community, I have chosen to have my professors know my name, and I have chosen to take a hands-on approach to my learning. Trading palm trees for snow storms was a small sacrifice.



Above: The Freshmen Honors class of 2009 in Dr. Paler's INS Class.

Photo: J. Juan

### Megan Showell

Entering the Honors Program, I find myself wondering if I'm truly cut out for the job. I know that being in Honors courses and AP classes have always been expected of me, and I've managed to do fairly well (obviously, seeing how I'm now a member of the Honors Program at CNR). As the course begins to pick up pace, and papers begin to be due, the anxiety that comes with all accelerated/advanced/honors courses takes hold as well. I find that even with all these anxieties and worries, it has been a great comfort to know that I'm not alone. The members of my class have also expressed fears very similar to mine, and this has allowed me to realize that these apprehensions are completely normal. Being able to relate to this group of women has pushed me to work my best, and given me the confidence to believe that yes, it may be tough, but I can pull through.

### Erin Daley

Aloha, my name is Erin Daley and I am from Massachusetts. I lived in Boston before moving to Brockton. I am a double major in Classical Humanities and International Relations. When I graduate from CNR, I plan to move out of the United States to either Europe or New Zealand. I love to write poetry as well as short stories, and I do SLAM, competitive performance poetry. I am completely obsessed with Phantom of the Opera, so if you see a girl singing random songs on campus, not to worry: it's me and I am harmless...



### IN MY HEAD

Digital art

Courtesy: A. Bachmann

### The Process:

#### **vision.**

something seen in a *dream*,

*trance*, or

*ecstasy*

a **supernatural appearance** that

**conveys a revelation**

an object of **imagination**.

#### **imagination.**

the act or **power of forming**

a **mental**

**image** of something

*not present* to the senses or

*never fully*

**perceived** in reality.

#### **a creation of the mind**

an *idealized* or

**poetic creation.**

#### **life.**

the sequence of

physical and

**mental experiences**

that make up

**the existence of an individual.**

one or more aspects of  
the

**process of living**

### "Two For One Special"

Pencil Drawing

Courtesy: A. Bachmann

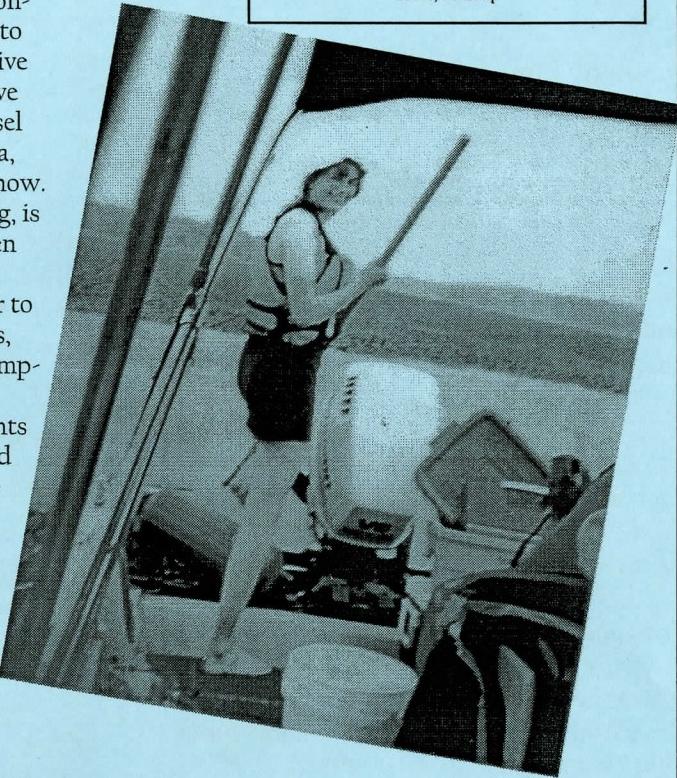
storming, designing, executing, and organizing my own project gave me invaluable insight into the scientific process as well as indispensable lab and field skills (and networking!) that will assist me as I pursue my career in the environmental field. My individual project sought to determine the habitat preference of nonnative zebra mussels in the Hudson River for native vs. nonnative vegetation, hence all the mussel measuring. Turns out, according to my data, they like the native stuff better. Good to know.

Science, despite the data crunching, is far from mundane. It is a collaborative, often unpredictable, and flat-out fun process. Whether motoring down the Hudson River to set up experimental sites in vegetation beds, canoeing in breathtaking tidal marshes, tramping around in the woods catching bugs, or teaching elementary and high school students about aquatic macroinvertebrates, it seemed I was always having a blast. Although perpetually wary of ticks, I explored the Institute's incredible forests and meadows and splashed around Wappinger Creek, accompanied other students and full-time research assistants as they carried out various research projects, and took a little time to party too (piñata, anyone?).

Can a summer internship show a woman who she is, what she wants to be, where she belongs, what she's been missing, and what she's always been searching for? The answer is yes, so I encourage you to get out there, apply for summer programs, and gain experience that can truly change your life.

P.S. As everyone I've told about IES knows, I've got a whole lot more cool stuff to

*Megan on one of her many adventures with the Institute of Ecosystem Studies Summer's Program*  
Photo: M. Skrip



say about it than I have time and space to write here. If anyone's interested in finding out more (I met Dr. Gene Likens!!) or how to apply for next summer's program, feel free to e-mail me: [mskrip@cnr.edu](mailto:mskrip@cnr.edu).



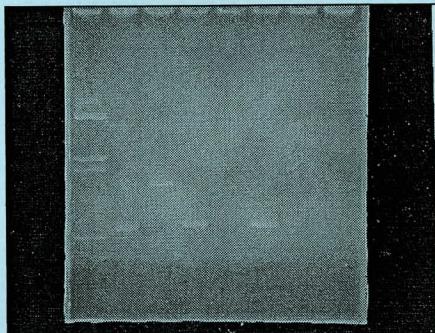
*Drawing courtesy of  
Megan Skrip*

## A PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE: GENETICS AND IDENTITY

Dr. Lynn Petrullo

Perhaps you have been struggling to maintain your weight. Like scores of others, you seek quick advice by turning to the internet to google "diet." Along with many other links, one pops up for "The DNA Diet." "Hmmmm- interesting," you muse as it catches your eye and you click on the website of the diet's creator, Carolyn Katzin. There, you discover that by using the results of a gene-targeted test of your DNA, she will design an individualized diet plan for you because as Katzin instructs "The DNA Diet is a cutting edge health program providing you with highly specific information about your molecular identity." This is just one example, among many, in popular culture that conveys what sociologist Dorothy Nelkin describes as genetic essentialism, an idea that "reduces the self to a molecular entity, equating human beings, in all their social, historical, and moral complexity, with their genes."

In recent years, especially with the completion of the major work of the federally financed, Human Genome Project (HGP), genetic essentialism has dispersed rapidly through our culture. Television programs such as Court TV and CSI have made DNA fingerprinting common knowledge creating a public awareness that individuals can be identified by means of their DNA sequence. Memes (Richard Dawkins' units of cultural transmission) of genetic predisposition and pre-determination are propagated through the media (for example, on the WB television station, a promotion for a new series, "Twins" tells us that "you can't run away from your own DNA.") and are disseminated even more rapidly via



*The PCR amplification of the DNA belonging to students in Dr. Petrullo's class, Genetics and Identity.*

*Photo: L. Petrullo*

the internet (for example, in the case of an etiology of a murder, what was first blogged on prozactruth.com , "...yes I do firmly believe Zoloft can be the cause of Christopher's behavior and violent act. A simple DNA test [click here](#) will undoubtedly show that Christopher had a defect in the CYP2D6..." was then repeatedly posted and discussed on the paxilproges.com forum, the CourtTV message board, etc.).

This message of genetic essentialism equating our identity with our genes was explicitly stated by James Watson in an interview in 1989, "Our DNA is what makes us human."

The Honors seminar, Genetics and Identity provides an opportunity for students to learn about the

science of genetic identification and its various uses and implica-

tions for society. Reading historian Philip Thurtle's paper on "The Creation of Genetic Identity" gave us an historical perspective highlighting the rise of human genetics in America during the early twentieth century as part of a government supported policy known as eugenics which advocated control of the gene pool as a means to address society's ills. We also read Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, viewed the film, *GATTACA*, and studied examples of "genetic art." We analyzed these products of historical and contemporary culture for examples of genetic identity and elements of genetic essentialism

*Continued on page 24*

# LOOKING BACK:

## The City of Southern Splendor: New Orleans Before and After Hurricane Katrina

Kathryn Tyranski, '06

I can still remember walking down Bourbon Street, along the cobblestone road illuminated by neon signs for restaurants and bars. I can still hear the live music streaming from every open door. I can still see the masses of citizens and tourists with Mardi Gras beads and smiles crowding Bourbon Street so a police car could barely pass through. The city was full of life.

I enjoyed the melody of the city, how it lulled you through the day whether you were exploring the French Market, having coffee and dessert at Café DuMond, or adventuring through a cemetery full of mausoleums and gravestones that were hundreds of years old. At night, the tune became a little faster as your heart raced while taking a ghost tour in one of America's most haunted cities. Oh—and the food! How could I forget the food? It was amazing, from po-boys to gumbo to seafood galore. I had never eaten so well. There are so many memories I can call upon and to think that all of them were created in a short, three day period. Nevertheless that was New Orleans...a city of diverse culture, beauty, and history.

I traveled to New Orleans (my first and only time) about a year ago with Emily Williams, Alana Ruptak and Dr. Bass. We were attending the National Collegiate Honors Council Conference. My memories are of what New Orleans was like then.

After Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, the city changed. I can't even imagine what it's like now and I only hope that reconstruction and recovery efforts are successful to return the city to its cultural splendor. I couldn't believe that the city was flooded. The hotel where we stayed for the conference was under water! I couldn't imagine what the older parts of the city—The French Quarter, the waterfront—looked like. I was devastated to see what had happened as I watched the evening news and read the newspaper.

I know recovery efforts have begun. I can't help but wonder if every local citizen I met while at the NCHC Conference is okay. I wonder if one of the owners of an infamous eatery

called "Mother's," who truly swore he was the living Elvis, is okay. I hope he is, for the sake of Elvis and the sake of New Orleans. I hope the Ghost Tour Guide who took us through the streets of the city telling us a little spooky history is okay. I hope all the citizens of the city are okay. I know that everyone isn't okay. The mayor of New Orleans, Ray Nagin, stated that over 900 died in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. For others, homes have been lost, along with possessions, stores, and many other countless things that I could never imagine losing.

I've read that Hurricane Katrina is being considered the most destructive hurricane to ever strike the United States. Katrina blew onto shore through the Gulf of Mexico and raged through Louisiana and Mississippi, devastating many towns and cities. Those places that were destroyed are being rebuilt. Parts of New Orleans are open once again, but some people who were affected by Hurricane Katrina could be out of a home for months to come.

I will continue to stay informed on the rebuilding of New Orleans, a city that became very dear to me over a course of three days. For three days, I felt like I was in another country, somewhere in Europe, meandering along old stone streets, seeing buildings painted in bright pastels, and looking at streetlamps that were actually fueled with fire.

I will hold onto my memories of New Orleans from one year ago and I will hope that officials remain optimistic in the



*The City of Southern Splendor: The New Orleans skyline.*

*Photo: Yahoo.com*

Continued on page 22



"Man Laying Down"



"Master Meets Modern"

## WORDS AND IMAGES

### "My Aunt Sue"

My Aunt Sue  
is the song that always gets stuck in your head  
the blister on your foot after walking for more  
than two hours around Chelsea  
the cherry on top of you ice cream sundae that  
you always pick off and never eat.

My Aunt Sue  
is that vomit feeling you get when you're  
really nervous  
that one piece of food stuck in your teeth that  
just won't come out  
a polar bear taking a peaceful nap in the warm  
sun.

My Aunt Sue  
is that itch that you try not to scratch but do  
anyway  
a stain that won't come out no matter how  
many times you wash it  
the gum stuck to the bottom of your new  
shoes.

### "Self Portrait"



## HONORS MATTERS

*Continued from page 5*

and minimal shelter. Do you get in line and claim to have been in a hurricane? Is that how America works?

Not if we are a country that aspires to *Tzedakah*. Not if we are a people that aspire to be just and fair and righteous. While giving clothes and cash is a wonderful gesture in the wake of a disaster the magnitude of Katrina, it is a far greater ambition to ensure that no one lives in the kinds of conditions that create such desperation when the winds subside and the waters recede, thinking that living in the Astrodome is a path for anyone, ever, to a better way of life. Rather, we need to see how all forms of charity, to be truly just, should understand the greater meaning of *Tzedakah* and ensure that the dignity of the recipient is cherished and preserved, and his or her needs are erased forever.

## ABOUT THE COVER

For the creation of the cover, I thought of what college meant to me: College is about finding your passion—something that sparks your soul and interests you enough to build a career around it.

The cover portrays snippets of childhood dreams of three girls. The first girl is playing "doctor" with her teddy bear, dreaming of one day saving the lives of many. The second dreams of being a famous artist, creating images for the world to appreciate. The third girl plays basketball, dreaming of one day being a WNBA star and entertaining millions.

College is about reaching your goals and making your dreams a reality. These are all dreams that college can help come true. Ultimately it's your hard work and determination that will take you to where you want to be. College is just the beginning.

—ALINA BACHMANN, '09

## ALUMNAE LETTER

*Continued from page 6*

fine—I could pay the rent, occasionally have fun, and focus on school. I was escaping the clenching grasp of the myth of having it all. In the search of fulfillment, I began working as a union organizer with the American Federation of Teachers, a career I had never considered but once I began interacting with workers, helping them with their plight and joining a fight I care about.

My advice is simple—relax and enjoy this time. Live your life at full-throttle, therefore, you must nourish all of the aspects of yourself. If after an exhausting day of work or classes, enjoy a meal or drink with some friends. A pleasant evening is laughing at my friends as we debate the supremacy of Derrida or Saussure when it comes to semiotics. We're nerds and are willing to admit it such a truth over a glass of whiskey before we disperse on the subway to our various, over-priced apartments. Find yourself and laugh.

Good luck with your senior years and whatever you decide to do in the future.

~Richelle Fiore  
October 11, 2005  
New York City

## A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE: ON GENETICS AND IDENTITY

*Continued from page 24*

After one better understands the science and technology of genetic identification, the power and versatility of its applications become more evident.

In the final third of the course, we will examine case studies in which DNA fingerprinting has served to revise our thinking about a person, historical event, or issue. We will discuss issues of diagnostic testing and screening, and the feasibility of national DNA identity cards. To consider the results of genetic identification studies, we will discuss such topics as Thomas Jefferson's legacy, the identity of Jack the Ripper, and the continued popularization of the fairy-tale of 'Anastasia' after it was demonstrated genetically that Anna Anderson was not the amnesiac, long-lost grand duchess of Russia and that Anastasia was executed along with the other Romanovs. After our discussions, each student will apply her knowledge by writing and presenting a case study of genetic identification of a fictional or real character of either unknown or mistaken identity

What becomes evident to students from the work involved in this seminar is that in contemporary society, genetics matters. The outcomes of genetic technologies are not just abstractions for exclusive discussion within the scientific community; popular culture repeatedly reminds us how they directly affect our lives. At some point in the immediate future, any one of us may be asked to make a choice based on a genetic screening or a diagnostic test. Will we be able to do so in an accurately informed way? And, beyond choosing an individualized diet plan based on our DNA sequence, the question will be, should we be offered some of these choices? This week, it was reported in the news that physicians at the Baylor College of Medicine are conducting a trial study in which parents undergoing in vitro fertilization will be able to select the sex of their child by means of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). Fifty couples have each paid \$19,000 to join this study. To my students in the seminar, let's revisit the question, will a second wave of eugenics be fueled by personal choices?

*Continued from page 16*  
more heated debates over this topic, several students agreed that it was acceptable to alter ones DNA so that life threatening diseases are limited. However, many of these students went on to say that it was perhaps immoral and totally unacceptable to pick and choose when it comes to things like hair and eye color, beauty and stature. They implied that such decisions should be left up to God. Others, like myself, believe that it is every part of ones genetic makeup that defines ones identity, and therefore it is unfair to label any specific type of alteration as immoral without labeling them all as such. It is these types of discussions and considerations that bring the relationship between genetics and identity to life and make this Honors seminar vibrant and thought provoking. These are not just lofty contemplations of improbable situations; rather the student it presented with valid questions concerning the concept of identity and whether the study of genetics will affect it in a progressive or repressive manor.

Yes, the idea of conception without eugenic input seems romantic and natural. Yet considering the fact that parents are already able to control various aspects of their child's identity, such as eye color and sex, I can't help but wonder how long we will be able to hold onto the idea of having genetically unaltered children. "Genetics and Identity" has above all provoked a sense of awareness of the rapid advancement of science in regards to humanity. The questions raised in this seminar and in this essay are representative of an issue that is gaining major importance in our society and is worth consideration.

